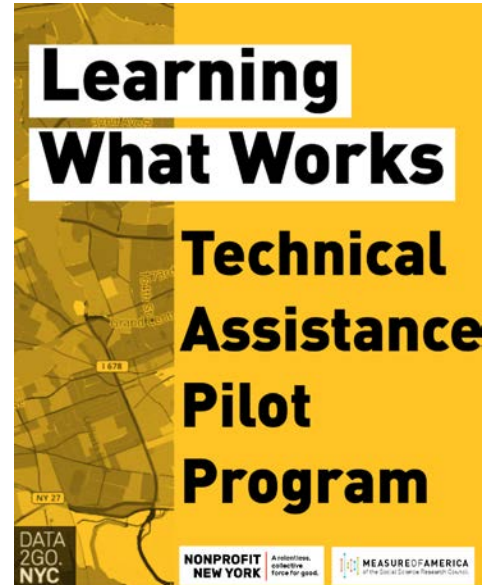


Strengthening a Culture of Data Literacy with New York City Nonprofit Leaders: Lessons Learned

In fall 2019, Measure of America (MOA) in partnership with Nonprofit New York launched **Learning What Works (LWW)**, a free nine-month technical assistance pilot program designed to increase nonprofit leaders' capacity to use data for setting goals, defining programming needs, evaluating progress, and communicating their results. The program was built around Measure of America's core commitment to democratizing data by making it easy to access and use.

Fifteen nonprofits were selected for our first LWW cohort. The nonprofits came from the fields of community development, education, and community health, and their representatives were a diverse group of leaders committed to improving their organizations' use of data. Through online and in-person sessions, the cohort engaged in hands-on learning, peer-to-peer learning, and one-on-one technical assistance with our team of coaches and subject-matter experts. The extended nine-month technical assistance program allowed for thoughtful planning and guided implementation, as well as the ability to respond over time to emerging needs.



Click [here](#) to view an open-to-all LWW webinar session:
Using Data to Build New Partnerships & Identify Goals

We recognize that accessing and using data can be difficult and were encouraged to see leaders expand their capacity to use data to guide decisions with a view to improving outcomes.

Key takeaways from the Learning What Works pilot:

Identify a specific outcome, data project, or learning goal at the onset

Leaders participating in LWW will greatly benefit from the program if they have something specific they want to accomplish at the start. In addition, writing down an action plan and sharing the plan with others creates accountability as well as opportunities to obtain feedback and gain clarity. At the same time, MOA, the technical assistance provider wants to help in as many ways as they can. Therefore, it is important to have realistic expectations of what resources are available for the partnership between nonprofit leader and TA provider.

Recruit nonprofits and leaders with enough similarities so that lessons learned are relevant and translatable.

Having cohort participants who were dedicated to the process, possessed a range of experiences, and had leadership support for their participation was key for this program. Consistent engagement from multiple partners from each organization promotes the continued learning and reflection required for real change.

Technical assistance solutions work best when teams have dedicated time to practice new skills and receive feedback.

As data storytelling and communicating impact becomes increasingly important to nonprofits, ongoing skill-building will be critical to drive their missions forward. Being part of a program with like-minded learners can increase confidence in trying new tools and strategies that can benefit the organization and the communities it serves. The safe space of the LWW program provided the opportunity for sharing challenges as well as successes, which kept leaders motivated to continue their data journey.

Expanding an organization’s data and learning culture takes serious commitment.

Creating an organizational culture that is responsive to leveraging the power of data requires buy-in at all levels—from direct service providers taking responsibility for consistent data entry to management aggregating, analyzing, using, and sharing the findings. It helps to start small and to be consistent in dedicating time to the continuous learning process.

New York nonprofit organizations recognize the potential of shared measures.

Data captured on our LWW evaluation survey indicated the majority of respondents *“are interested in exploring shared measurement systems to monitor performance and impact (e.g., Key Performance Indicator dashboards) with other NYC nonprofits providing services/solutions in the areas of community development, education, and health.”* Therefore, we will continue to engage nonprofits in conversations to explore this concept further.

Learning What Works Participant Quotes:

“I truly enjoyed this experience; the facilitators were well chosen, and the materials were invaluable.”

“I really enjoyed the program and my growth overall. Thank you for this great opportunity.”

“The LWW program introduced me to materials and methodologies I was not familiar with or aware of when I first started the program. LWW not only shared information but gave me the resources necessary to find information on my own and look at data from new perspectives.”

“I liked that the LWW program brought in professional guest presenters who used concrete examples of how to present data.”

“The LWW program exceeded my expectations.”

A Special Thanks to:

2019-2020 Learning What Works Cohort

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